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THE FAMILY FEUD.

A FRENCH STORY.

The families of Piombo and Porta, in the island of Corsica, had long been divided by a hereditary feud, called in the language of the country a *vendetta*. It was similar to those vendettas which in other parts of Europe were in former ages handed down from father to son, and, before the reign of civilization and of good laws, rendered it the first duty of the successor to avenge his ancestors upon the family and clan of their foes.—When Corsica became part of France, an attempt was made to put an end to the dreadful crimes which these vendittas were perpetually causing, but the savage temperament of the people presented a powerful obstacle to the success of these efforts. France herself, torn by internal dissensions, could not enforce the supremacy of the law in a distant island, and it was not until Napoleon Bonaparte got the government of that country into his own hands, that a resolute determination was expressed of suppressing these outrages in his native island, their disastrous consequences being well known to that extraordinary individual in his earlier history. The last occasion upon which the revengeful spirit of the Corsicans was displayed in these family broils, took place about the time of Napoleon's election as First Consul of the French Republic, and resulted in the almost mutual extermination of the two races of Piombo and Porta. Such of the family of Piombo as escaped the general destruction, took refuge in Paris, and claimed the protection of the First Consul.—They consisted of the elder Piombo, his wife, and daughter, a young child of seven years of age, and, as the family of the Bonaparates had once been under the protection of the Piombos, Napoleon willingly received the fugitives, and promised to provide for their future maintenance.

His escape to Paris, was verging upon his sixtieth year, but age had neither bent his lofty figure nor dulled the fierce expression of his eyes. He was distinguished even among his countrymen for the sternness and inflexibility of his temper; and if he were unrelenting in the pursuit of his enemies, he was equally steadfast in vindication of his friends. With his character, Napoleon was not unacquainted, and feeling, perhaps, in his newly acquired sovereignty, that the presence of a resolute adherent near his person was on many accounts advisable, he gave to his Corsican compatriot a post in his household which was at once honorable and lucrative. The fidelity of Bartholomeo was undoubted, and during the reign of Bonaparte, he was loaded with the imperial favors, raised to the dignity of a count of the empire, and endowed with ample territorial revenues.

In this elevated position stood Piombo when the dynasty of the Bonapartes was precipitated from the throne of France, and gave place to the possession of the Bourbons. He then retired from the palace of the Tuileries, in which he had usually resided, and took up his abode in an ancient hotel, formerly an appanage of a distinguished refugee family, which he owed to the generosity of the dethroned emperor. As circumstances had prevented his taking any active part in the restoration of Napoleon, or in the reign of the Hundred Days, which was concluded on the plains of Waterloo, the Count di Piombo was not excluded from the terms of the amnesty, which was promulgated upon the second return of Louis XVIII. But from that time, he lived secluded in his own domestic privacy, preserving the cold reserve of an attached adherent of the exiled family. Upon the brow of the old count hung a cheerless though imperturbable air, while in his large mansion a uniform stillness seemed to harmonize with the melancholy feelings of its inmates. His aged consort and his youthful daughter were the only beings who participated in his solitude, and tended to alleviate its weight and misery.

Before the overthrow of Napoleon, Ginevra di Piombo, the count's daughter, had mingled in the splendor and pomp of the imperial court, of which her grace and beauty had made her a distinguished ornament. Though the exterior advantages she possessed—beauty, rank, fortune, and the favor of an emperor—seemed to have insured her many offers of marriage, yet either her disinclination to leave her parents alone, or the admiration rather than affection which she was calculated to command in society, had hitherto kept her heart and person disengaged. When the events of the political world drove the family into retirement, Ginevra felt even more happy than she had done in the turmoil of a court-life, and, with an admirable fortitude, devoted herself to the care of parents whose only solace in life was now in her—the last and dearest of their children.

After the second return of the Bourbons, and while Paris was witness of many scenes of massacre, it was dangerous for an officer in the uniform of the Imperial Guard to appear abroad. Many of the officers, indeed, of that celebrated corps, were proscribed by name, and even those who were so peculiarly designated, found it expedient to seek shelter until the fury of revenge was a little allayed. While the storm was at its height, a young man in the condemned uniform had taken refuge in the house of a painter and eminent artist in Paris, who was known to be a warm partisan of the late dynasty. As a vigilant search was maintained by the armed police, in the course of which the residences of such persons were repeatedly visited and ransacked, it was necessary for the artist to exercise an extreme caution in succoring the fugitive soldier. He concealed the presence of so dangerous an inmate even from his wife, and secreted him in a closet partitioned off from the saloon in which he gave lessons in painting to several young ladies of the higher classes. His workshop or painting-room was apart from his residence, and, for benefit of light, placed at the top of an adjoining building in the same court-yard.—This was the place which the generous painter selected as the least likely to be suspected, at the same time that it permitted the proscribed officer a means of exercise and relaxations when the room was cleared of the pupils, as the painter was the only person of his own household who ever entered it.

Ginevra di Piombo had for two or three years been a constant attendant at the work-room of M. Servin, the painter alluded to; and both from the admirable talents she displayed in the art, and the well known attachment of her father to the cause of Napoleon, she was treated by him with the highest respect. At this time, when her occupations were so [illegible] to devote a more than usual attention to this elegant and fascinating accomplishment. Thus she was often left behind by her companions, who were either less enthusiastic in the art, or had a more varied scale of amusements. On one occasion, when Ginerva had been so intent upon her pursuit as not only to be left alone, but to be surprised by the shades of evening, as she was preparing hurriedly to depart, she was astounded as beholding the door of the closet gently opened, and a young officer, in a blue and red uniform, with the imperial eagle, tread softly into the room. Equal surprise and embarrassment appeared on the countenances of the young couple as they surveyed each other; and it was fortunate, precisely at this moment M. Servin ascended the staircase, and entered the apartment. Instantly comprehending how this unexpected interview had occurred, he stepped toward the officer and said to him:

"Monsieur, Louis, you are too impatient in your confinement, but you have nothing to fear from this young lady.—She is the daughter of an old friend of the Emperor, so we may make her a confidante in your secret."

The air of sympathy which was already on the features of Ginevra assured the young soldier sufficiently of this truth, even if her beauty had not already disposed him to regard her with an entire dependence.

"You are wounded, sir?" said she with much emotion.

"It is a trifle," replied he; "the wound is nearly closed."

His left arm was suspended in a sling, and the paleness of his features bespoke a suffering which his words belied.—Two young beings brought together in a situation so affecting, could scarcely fail to be united by a reciprocal sentiment. Ginevra, thus called upon to act as the guardian and protectress of a brave soldier, suffering in a cause she had been taught to believe as holy and patriotic, felt all the enthusiastic generosity natural to her sex, arise in favor of the oppressed and wounded hero. He on the contrary, beheld in her something more than human, when benevolence and commiseration were joined to a grace so bewitching and a beauty in itself so attractive. The scene itself was calculated to impress a tender feeling indelibly upon the mind. The softened light, the romance of the incident, the danger to all concerned—every thing conspired to produce those sensations which seeming to spring only from a feeling mind, yet link together. Ginevra, yet unconcious how deeply the emotion had sunk in her breast, offered her father's purse and influence in aid and protection of the soldier. Monsieur Servin, more prudent, begged her to preserve for some short time the secret even from [illegible] lest he might be in any way compromised with the government, assuring her that the fugitive was quite safe in his present hiding place. The officer himself joined in this request; and there was something delicious in the reflection, that she alone was thought worthy of being entrusted with the fate of a warrior of Napoleon, she consented to abstain from any attempts to alleviate his present misfortune further than to beguile the tediousness of his confinement by her prolonged presence in the saloon.

From that day, Ginevra passed hours in the work room when [illegible] were gone, and he only present who [illegible] become to her an object of so intense interest. She held the brush in her hand, but it seldom touched the canvas while Louis sat by her side, speaking with a fervid eloquence from his eyes. Their conversation was short and broken, for with lovers a monosyllable [illegible] more than the laboured paragraph of oratory. Sometimes she sung, in a low tone, a plaintive air of Italy, and [illegible] was delighted to find that Louis was a perfect master of the soft dialect [illegible] was her own native tongue. From [illegible] means, which seem to derive [illegible] their simplicity, is affection [illegible] firmly strengthened, until it becomes a passion to which life itself is subordinate. That the conduct of Ginevra in thus admitting to what must strictly be considered a clandestine intimacy, was improper and inexcusable, must be allowed, and the reader [illegible] the strongest moral which could be drawn from behavior so inconsiderate.

The lengthened visits of Ginevra to M. Servin's now began to attract the notice of the old count and his wife, who so idolized her that her frequent absence was regarded with surprise. They therefore expressed their surprise that she should devote so much time to painting when it caused them unhappiness. To such an appeal, Ginevra could reply only with tears. Her father excited by so unusual a spectacle, earnestly demanded the cause. His questions only redoubled her confusion.

[illegible] picture then?' said the count, taking her by the hand.

'No,' replied she with a sudden energy; 'a falsehood shall not even once escape the lips of your daughter—I am not painting.'

'What are you doing, then? I trust you are engaged in no improper intimacy?'

'Not improper, I should think,' she replied.

'Explain,' cried the father 'tell me all.'

Ginevra thus importuned, explained how she had become acquainted with M. Louis, and the interest which he had excited in her bosom.

No declaration could [illegible] more vehemently the feelings of the old Corsican. He regarded his daughter's affection as peculiarly his own, as due exclusively to himself and her mother.—The idea of another person participating in her love, he entertained with abhorrence. Those childish caresses which he now bestowed upon her in his doting fondness he must see [illegible] by another. His daughter seemed to forsake him in his old age and in his desolation—to cast him aside as if she loathed him. Such was the selfish conclusion to which the suspicious mind of Piombo led him. He at once forbade Ginevra to think more of her young admirer. She besought and entreated him to consider that her happiness was at stake. It was in vain—he would hear nothing, but declared imperatively she should never marry in his lifetime. So emphatic a denunciation aroused the downcast spirit of his descendant.

'But I *will* marry,' said she, with a fierceness equal to his own; 'your sentence is inhuman.'

The determination of Ginevra thus expressed seemed to awe and confound the old count. He resumed his seat without saying a word. His wife now interposed, and took the part of the daughter. Ginevra cast herself at her father's feet.

'I will still love you and live with you, my dear father,' she cried; 'I will never forsake you!'

Bartholomeo was at last moved. When he learned that the young man was a captain of the Imperial Guard, that he had fought at Waterloo, and, though wounded, had been among the last to leave that fatal field, he consented to interest himself in his behalf, and to receive him into his own house.

A high official personage had been indebted to the Count di Piombi during the Imperial rule for an important favor, and through his influence procured the pardon of M. Louis. He was even placed on the roll of officers available for service. Ginevra flew with undissembled rapture to convey this gratifying account to her lover. Having laid aside his uniform for a suit of plain clothes, he accompanied her to her father's house. She led him up the stairs, trembling with anxiety lest the old count should not like him. Piombo was sitting in a window recess in a large saloon, with a grave forbidding aspect. They advanced toward him, and Ginevra thus presented her lover:

'My father,' said she, 'I present to you a gentleman whom you will feel pleasure in seeing. This is Monsieur Louis, who fought four paces from the Emperor at Mount St. Jean.

The count did not arise nor relax the severity of his features.

'You wear no decoration, sir, I observe,' said he coldly.

'It does not become an officer of Napoleon, under present circumstances,' answered M. Louis, with some timidity.

The reply seemed to gratify the prejudices of the old man, though he said nothing. Madame di Piombo, to break a silence which was at once harsh and uncourteous, hazarded a remark:

'What a singular resemblance,' exclaimed she, 'this gentlemen has to the family of the Portas!'

'It is only natural,' replied the young man, upon whom the eyes of old Piombo glared with the fury of a demon; 'I belong to that family.'

'A Porta?' shouted the count. 'Your name?'

'Luigi Porta,' replied the officer.

Piombo arose slowly, under an emotion too strong for utterance. His countenance grew livid with rage. His wife took his arm, and drew him gently toward the door. They left the room together, Bartholomeo directing a gesture of vengeance against the unfortunate youth, and a look of horror at his equally wretched daughter.

'What misery in a word!' said Ginevra in a tone of anguish. 'Did you not know that our family and yours are hereditary enemies?'

'No,' answered her lover: 'I was carried from Corsica when I was six years old, on account of some misfortune which happened to my father, but I never know what it was. I was educated at [illegible] with my mother's uncle, and when I left him to enter the army, he told me I had a powerful enemy in France, and that I should therefore take the name of Louis only, by which I have been always known. He told me, likewise, our estate was seized; and since that time I have been engaged in active service.

'You must quit this house,' said Ginevra.

'Is then this fearful hatred of our fathers between us too?' asked he, as he took her hand.

'I cannot find it so in my heart,' she replied; 'but do not now stay since your safety may be threatened. I will find means to communicate with you—but be upon your guard, and it is against my own father I warn you.'

So saying, she conducted him to the door, and seeing him safely into the street, bade him adieu with all the warmth of affection she had ever previously exhibited.

Ginevra flew to her own room, not for the purpose of dissolving into useless tears, but to enter upon a serious commune with herself as to the course she should pursue. The fearful question she had to solve was, whether she should sacrifice her love and the happiness of Louis and herself, to gratify the implacable hatred of her father; or to surrender her home, her station, her parents in favor of a man whom every worldly consideration called upon her to reject? That her father would be immovable in his denunciatian, she knew too well. Yet, when did youthful hope despair? She resolved to attempt to argue with him, to entreat. She could not consent to give up her love for a feud. Besides, she pledged her faith; and when she thought of Louis, alone and without a friend in the world, a generous sympathy moistened her eyes and nerved her resolution. She determined still to love him and to marry him, should the paternal malediction fall upon her. The resolute mind of Bartholomeo was inherited by his daughter, and, though she felt for him all the affection and respect natural to their relation, she believed herself not bound to obey what seemed a cruel and unjust command.—With such sentiments, she descended to the saloon, in which the old count and his wife were sitting in a mournful silence.

The conversation between the father and daughter was not long. Piombo expressed at once his irreversible decree.

"Who espouses not my quarrel," said he, "is not of my family. While I live, a Porta shall not be my son-in law.—Such is my sentence."

Ginevra attempted to show that she had no reason to partake of his enmity; that Louis Porta, who was only six years old when he left Corsica, could have done him no harm; that it was a Christian's duty to forgive and not to revenge an injury even when inflicted. Her arguments were in vain.

"He is a Porta," replied the implacable old man, "and that is enough."

She then prayed him to regard her happiness, to reflect that, by indulging his hate against an imaginary enemy, he destroyed the peace of mind and the life of his own child. She begged her mother to join in her entreaties; but Bartholomeo was inflexible.

"Then, in spite of you," said Ginevra, "he shall be my husband!"

"I will rather see you dead," rejoined her parent, clenching his bony hand.—So saying he threw her from him.

"Begone!" said he, "I have no longer a daughter. I will not give you my curse, but I abandon you; you have now no father!"

He now conducted her to the street and closed the door upon her. Ginevra proceeded to place herself under the protection of Madame Servin, the wife of the painter, who had always expressed great friendship for her, until the day when she should be united to Luigi Porta. But she was destined to experience, the insults which are prepared for those who act contrary to the usages of the world. Madame Servin did not approve of her conduct, and begged to be excused from receiving her under her present circumstances. Louis, therefore, obtained for her a small lodging with a respectable matron, near to that he had himself for some time occupied. Here she remained until the marriage could be solemnized. Her mother had traced her retreat, and sent her a variety of things necessary for a young wife, together with a purse of money. A short note accompanied the present, stating that it was sent unknown to the count, and contrary to his injunctions. In her desolation, this mark of maternal kindness drew from Ginevra a flood of tears and a feeling of remorse which the consolation of Louis alone could efface.

At length the day of the marriage arrived. Ginevra saw no one around her to hail the event. Louis procured two witnesses, who were [illegible] in the company he commanded in the Guards, and was now a keeper of a livery stable. The other was a butcher, the landlord of the house which was to be their future residence. These good people attended upon the occasion, as if an ordinary affair of business was to be transacted. They were dressed neatly and plainly, though nothing announced that they made part of a nuptial-fete—Ginevra herself was simply habited, conforming to her fortune, and in air of gravity, if not of coldness, seemed to reign around.

As the church and mayor's office were not far distant, Louis gave his arm to the bride, and, followed by the two witnesses, they proceeded on foot to the place of their espousal. After the formalities were gone through, and their names signed, Luigi and Ginevra were united. It was with difficulty they got an old priest to celebrate their union, and give it the Church's benediction, since the ecclesiastics were all eager in their services to more distinguished couples. The priest hastened over the ceremony, and after uniting them before God, as the mayor had united them according to law, he finished the mass, and left them. The marriage being thus celebrated in its two forms, they quitted the church, and Louis conducted his wife to their humble residence.

For the space of a year from their union as man and wife, Louis and Ginevra enjoyed as perfect a happiness as could fall to the lot of mortals. Though living far apart from luxury or extravagance, they were too much lovers to regard either as essential to their bliss. The time passed gayly onward, and unheeded by the youthful couple, who could not part even for an hour. If Ginevra ever thought of her parents, it was to regret that they could not view and share her happiness. But with the expiration of the year, came care to corrode their joy. With the buoyant feeling of youth, unacquainted with the horrors of poverty, they laughed at its approach.

'I can paint, my Louis,' said Ginevra; 'we can easily support ourselves.'

And she prepared to exercise those talents for her subsistence which in other days had tended to her amusement.—She executed copies from the old masters, and Louis set out to sell them. But he was ignorant of their value, and of the persons from whom to obtain it. He was content to sell them to an old furniture broker at a very low price. Yet Ginevra was pleased to find that her exertions could earn money, and help to maintain her Louis and herself. She redoubled her assiduity, and finished several pieces; she labored with the zeal and ardor of a proselyte. Her exertions